

11. TWO UNIQUE METHODS OF FISHING FOR COBITIDS IN TUNGABHADRA RIVER

(With two plates)

INTRODUCTION

During the riverine survey work of Tungabhadra drainage it was observed that two conventional but novel type of gears are operated for fishing in the vicinity of Harihar. They are locally known as 'Kallu-sara' and 'Hullu-sara' used for catching coarse (forage) fishes particularly cobitids. These two methods of fishing are restricted to a few fishermen families in Guthur village situated on the right bank of the river near Harihar, and the gear have not been reported so far. Gopinath (1953) and Karamchandani & Pandit (1967) have described similar scare line fishing of entirely different design and structure.

FISHING GEARS

Scare line type—I (Local name 'Kallu-sara'): As the local name itself connotes in Kannada it is a simple bottom scare line made up of paddy straw (*Oryza sativa*) or coir rope, interspersed with small hard limestones in between the two strands of the rope, at 10 to 12 centimetres interval (Plate I). The two ends of the scare line are tied to two thin bamboo poles of 1.5 to 2 metre length for dragging a 50 to 80 metres long rope as well as to scare the fish.

Scare line type—II (Local name 'Hullu-sara'): It is a scare line similar to type I, made out of paddy straw or coir rope. Small bundles of 'bagi hullu' (*Aristida setacea*) tied in the form of brush are inserted in between the strands of the rope at regular intervals of 10 to 12 cm. Old net pieces of one centimetre mesh bar fixed in two to three layers are hung in the centre with a light hollow bamboo pole of 1.0 to 1.5 metre length to serve as improvised float (Plate II). Some time this scare line is operated even without the net in the middle. On either side of this bamboo pole stones weighing about 100 gm are also tied to the scare rope at five metre intervals, which enable to sweep close to the silty or sandy bed of the river. The ends of the scare rope are fastened with thin bamboo poles of 1.5 to 2 metres length which are used to disturb the fish and also to drag the entire 80 to 100 metres long scare line.

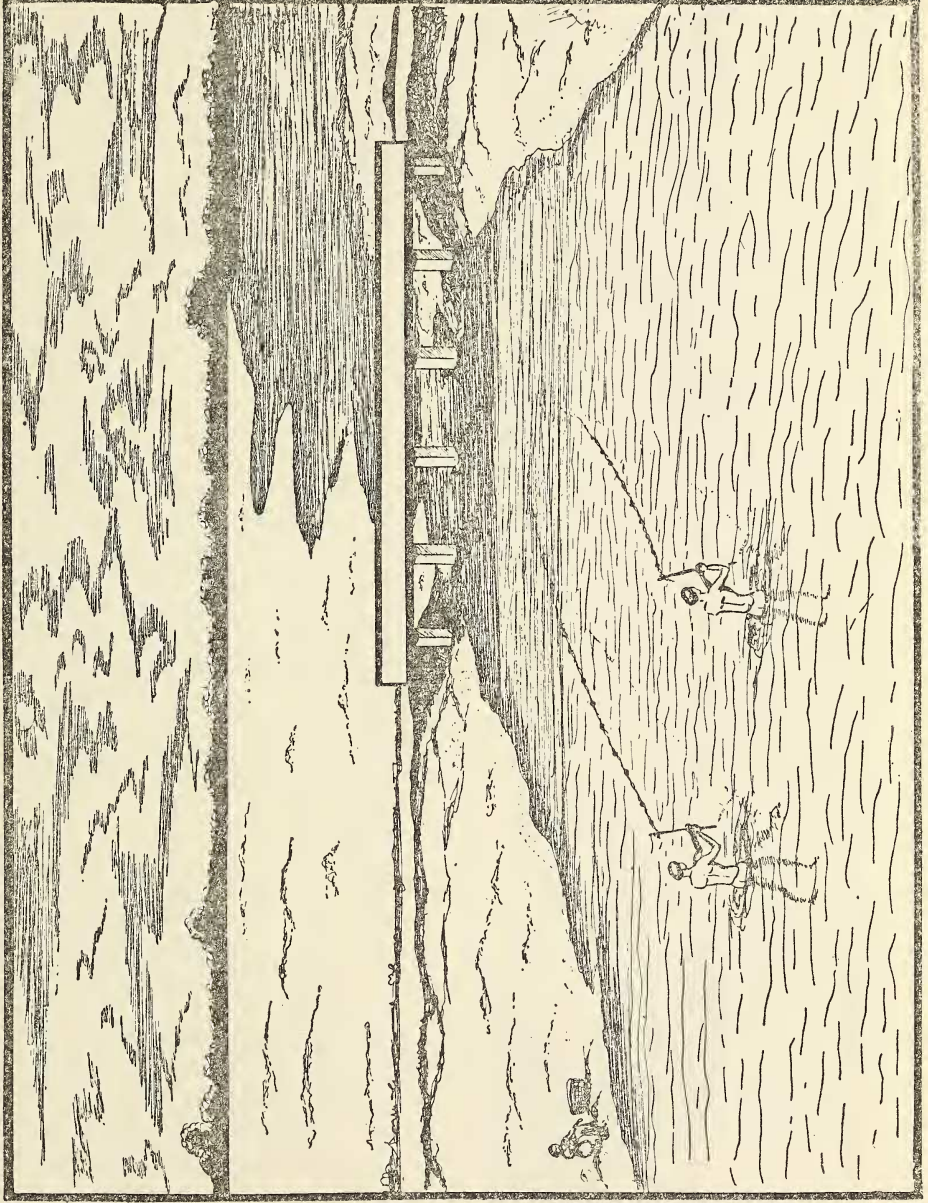
DETAILS OF OPERATION

(a) *Fishing unit and methods of operation*: A fishing unit consists of three fishermen, two to drag the scare line and the third to disen-

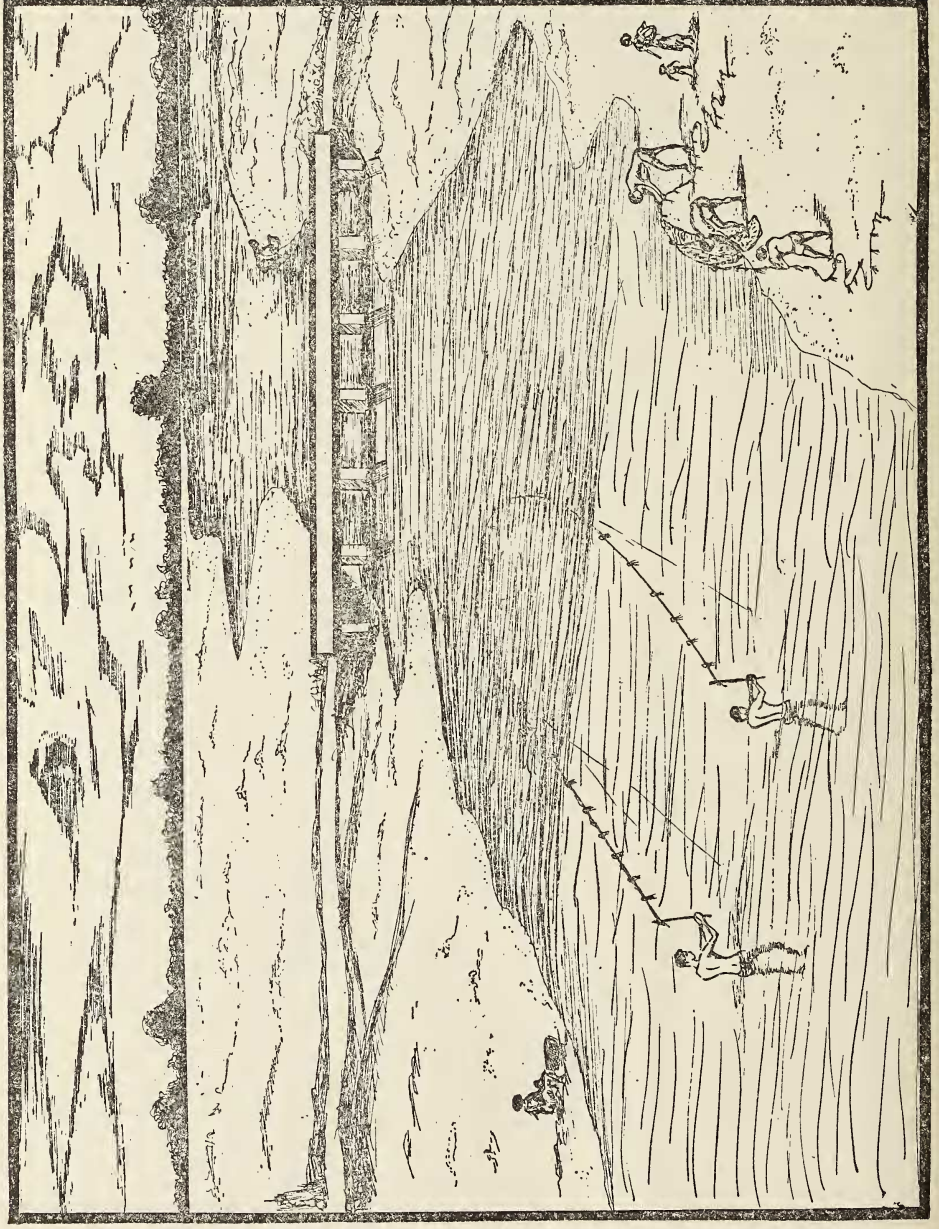
tangle the line from any snags on the river bed and to splash water to turn back fugitives from the line. Usually, the line is operated by a fisherman leading with one end of the line across the river and passing diagonally down stream. As the first fisherman reaches the middle of the river, the second man on the other end rushes downstream to bring up the level with the first. The third fisherman starts splashing at the sides and rushes to the point of entanglement if any. When once the line is in operation, the two on either end of the line move slightly faster than the water current. Careful attention is paid for effective dragging, giving sufficient bend in a semicircular fashion to the line, otherwise the tension by dragging on either side would raise the scare line resulting in the loss of fish trapped. In case a snag is encountered, that portion is lifted carefully by splashing on either side. The two wading fishermen on both sides remain in water and hug the banks to prevent escape and work the banks with poles provided on either end to herd the fish towards the enclosure. As premature closure may bring unprofitable catch, the line is dragged over several shallows before reaching the margin of the river bed. The fishermen select a shingle bank slope which is ideal for hauling. As the two fishermen approach the site selected for hauling they kneel down and gently draw the line, to reduce it into a narrow loop when the fish become increasingly alarmed.

The 'Kallu-sara' is dragged round in a smooth arch and the gap is gradually decreased to drive the fish into a 'hapa' (cloth bag). During the time of dragging 'Kallu-sara' a selective fishing gear for cobitids, the larger fishes escape. As the scare line is operated close to the bottom of the river bed and the cobitids which are usually at the bottom are trapped in the area enclosed by the line. The limestones tied in between the two strands of the scare line disturb the bottom layers while dragging and scare the fish. As a result the fish are diverted towards the river bank and the scare line is then dragged towards the bank where one fisherman is ready with a 'hapa' to trap the fishes. In case of 'Hullu-sara' the two ends are kept some distance apart and the line is dragged slowly so that the fishes move towards the net fixed in the middle. When the net part of the line approaches the fishermen they lift the net quickly to avoid the escape of fish. This net which is non selective, captures smaller size carps, catfishes and other coarse fishes. The complete process requires a very careful operation and smooth execution to get the best catch.

(b) *Time and season of fishing*: Usually the fishing is practiced from November to April and sometimes till the end of May, in shallow regions when the water is clear and the current mild. When once the water becomes turbid during monsoon the scare line operation ceases.



Showing fish drive by ' Kallu-sara ' scare line in Tungabhadra River near Harihar.



Showing the operation of ' Hullu-sara ' scare line in Tungabhadra River near Harihar.